

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.





Reserve  
aGN799  
.P4R64  
1995

GPO  
Depository  
Library  
Program

# Rock Art of the Comanche National Grassland



Whether these  
designs on the rock  
represent  
communications  
among ancients,  
religious rites,  
artwork, or  
expressions of  
personality,  
they intrigue  
us.





## Experiencing Rock Art

Enjoy the petroglyphs and pictographs in the Comanche Grassland. Let your mind connect with the ones who crafted them. Gain inspiration from their artistry and join those who are actively protecting them. Look or take pictures, but leave the rock art unspoiled for the enjoyment of others.

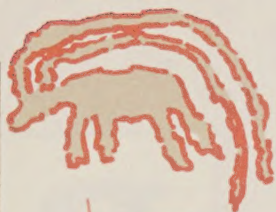
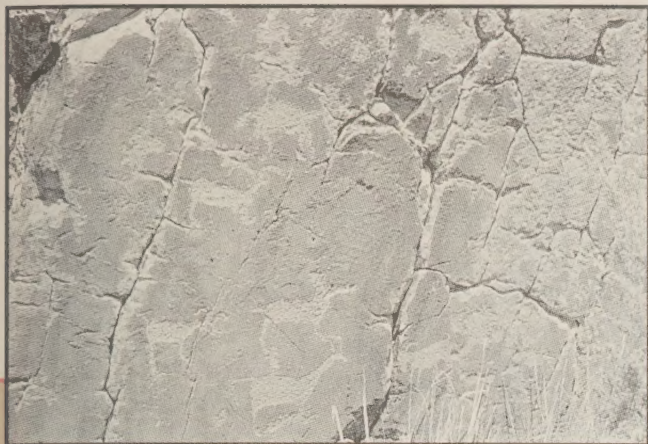
## Photography



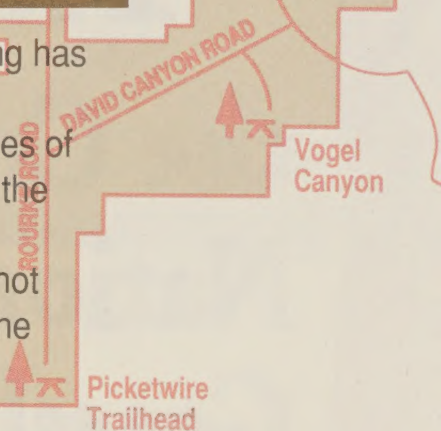
Photographing rock art is difficult but can be rewarding. A camera angle perpendicular to the rock face and at eye level with the design will yield the best results.

A 35 mm camera will allow the most control over poor lighting conditions. Since rock art is usually located on vertical rock faces or under overhanging cliffs, full sun or constant shade are common situations. Harsh light can be controlled by using filters – yellow for black and white film, and a “sky”, “haze” or orange filter for color. Also try using a lower F-stop for rock art in partial shade. Close framing can help make up for a lack of contrast. Full shade can be controlled by using a flash. Hold the flash several feet to one side to create shadows in the grooves, or photograph at sunrise or sunset.





**“Chalking”** or other marking has been used in the past by some photographers to enhance the outlines of petroglyphs. This practice damages the rock art and lends a false, modern element to photographs. Please do not mark the designs in any manner in the hopes of bettering your photos.



## Rock Art Sites on the Comanche National Grassland



### Carrizo Creek

is about 10 miles south of Highway 160 between Kim and Springfield. Look for images of mountain sheep and elk or deer with fantastically-branched antlers. Perhaps these panels are a record of successful hunts or were used in rituals to increase the prowess of hunters. There are picnic tables, a restroom and a short loop trail to the rock art.



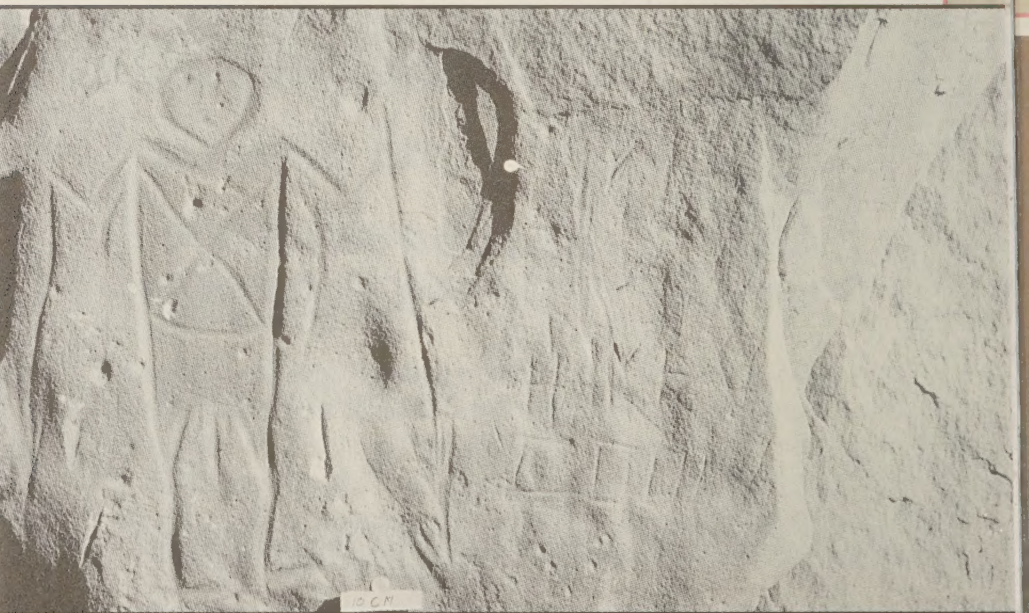
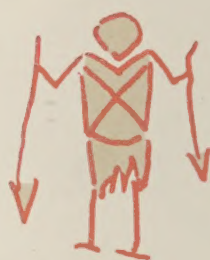
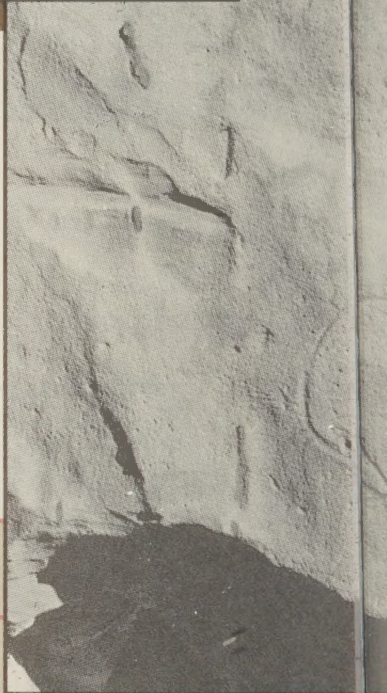




## Picketwire Canyonlands

are 10 miles beyond Vogel Canyon. The canyon currently is accessible only by a walking/bicycling trailhead or by horseback (allow a full day and bring plenty of water).

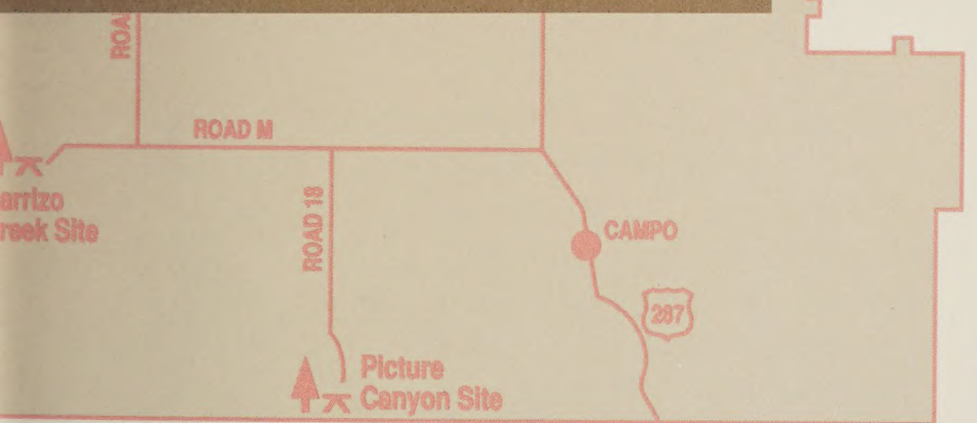
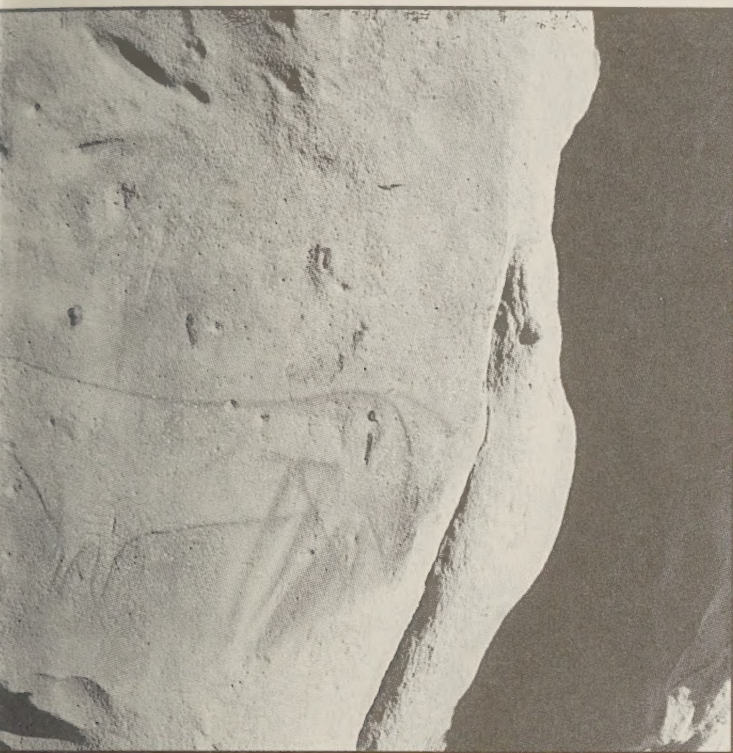
Before planning to visit this site contact the Forest Service office in La Junta at (719) 384-2181 for additional information and local conditions. Some rock art panels located along the trail have been identified for public viewing. Look for petroglyphs of meandering lines, abstract designs, and animal figures.





# Vogel Canyon

is approximately 15 miles south of La Junta. There are picnic and restroom facilities and an interpretive trail that includes several rock art panels. The rock art is situated on vertical rock faces, often in shallow rock overhangs. Look for petroglyphs in abstract designs and symbols. One large animal figure is prominent in the northern overhang. This rock art probably was done by small groups of people living under the cliffs and farming in the canyon about 1100 years ago.



## Picture Canyon

southwest of Springfield on the Colorado/Oklahoma border, has much variety in its rock art, but unfortunately much of it has been damaged. Most rock art figures here were probably fashioned during the 18th or early 19th century by historic Indian tribes. There are blue and red pictographs and animal and human petroglyphs. Some researchers have suggested the vertical line inscriptions here may reflect Pre-Columbian European travelers. Rock Art here also may have astronomical significance; you may plan to visit this site on the fall equinox (September 21st) when a local festival is held. There are picnic tables and a restroom here for the visitor and a hiking trail that leads to the site.



## Rock Art – A Vanishing Heritage



Rock art is heritage from our prehistoric past that can never be replaced or duplicated. Unfortunately, it is vanishing at an alarming rate. Few panels in the American West are free from natural deterioration or man-made damage.

Nature destroys slowly with rain, freeze and thaw, and scouring winds. Man-caused destruction is occurring at an increasing rate as remote sites become more accessible. The most common types of damage are spray painted and scratched graffiti on top of rock art. A less frequent type of vandalism, but one that is more damaging, is using rock art for target practice. Most vandalism is done by people who do not understand the value of what they are destroying.

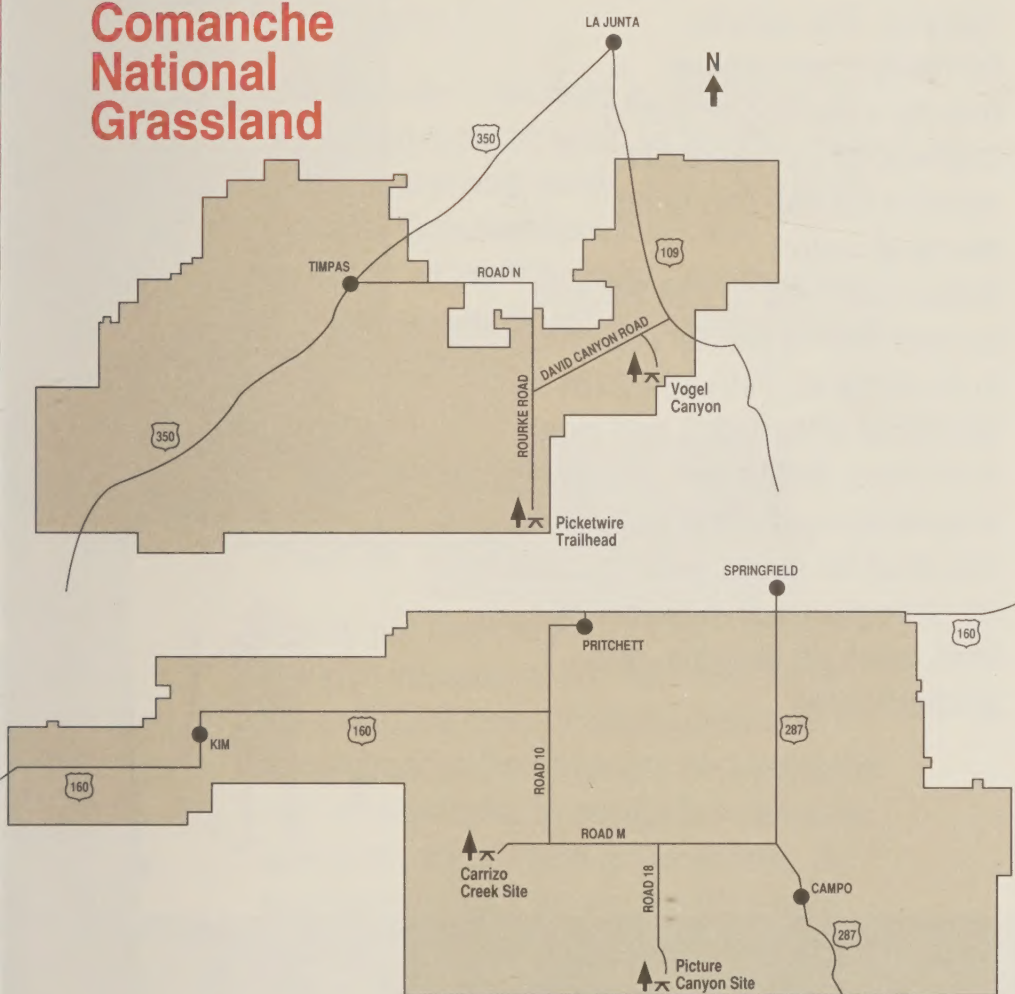
There are public laws that protect rock art resources, but they are difficult to enforce. An educated, active, caring public is the best protection. Please report any persons vandalizing rock art to the nearest Comanche National Grassland office.







## Comanche National Grassland



## U.S. Forest Service Comanche National Grassland

"The policy of the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, religion, sex, or disability, familial status, or political affiliation. Persons believing they have been discriminated against in any Forest Service related activity should write to: Chief, Forest Service, USDA, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090-6090."





1022412108

# Rock Art



“Rock art” is the term used for images chiseled or painted on rock surfaces by prehistoric people. It is found on all continents inhabited by humans. Rock art pecked into the rock surface is called “petroglyphs.” Painted designs are “pictographs.”

Southeastern Colorado is notable for its preserved rock art sites, located on both public and private lands. The Comanche National Grassland provides four locations where the visitor can experience rock art resources without trespassing on private lands.

## Interpreting Rock Art

Part of our fascination with rock art is trying to interpret it. We will never know the complete story of what prehistoric people saw in their rock art. Archeologists see consistencies in design but can only speculate about intent and meaning. By experiencing rock art we can for a brief moment be one with the prehistoric artist and imagine the lifeways of our past.

